GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:126
ANSWERED ON:27.11.2002
AIDS TEST OF FOREIGNERS
ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the foreigners visiting India are subjected to AIDS tests;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of assistance sought by the Government from other countries to check the spread of AIDS epidemic?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA)

(a)to(c): A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 126 FOR 27.11.2002

The foreigners visiting India are not subjected to HIV/AIDS test. The National AIDS Prevention and Control Policy approved by Government in April 2002 explicitly states that there is no public health rationale on mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS. On the other hand such an approach could be counter productive as it may scare away large number of suspected cases from getting detected and treated. HIV testing carried out on voluntary basis with appropriate pre-testing and post-test counselling is considered to be better strategy and is in line with WHO guidelines on HIV testing.

2. The original recommendations regarding mandatory HIV test of foreign students was made at a time when HIV infection was not common in this country. These recommendations were to protect India from the import of infection from abroad. National HIV sentinel surveillance data in India has clearly demonstrated that HIV infection is prevalent in all sections of the society across the country. As such mandatory testing of few foreigners/foreign students will not have any impact on HIV transmission in India.

3. World Health Organisation guidelines on International Travel and Health, 1999, has specifically mentioned that any requirement for HIV antibody test certificate (`AIDS Free Certificate`) is contrary to the International Health Regulations.

4. In view of the above, the issue of mandatory HIV/AIDS testing of foreigners was extensively debated with the experts. The experts were of the opinion that mandatory HIV testing of foreigners/foreign students is contrary to the recommendations of the World Health Organisation.

5. The Government has since approved the revised policy/guidelines and it has been decided to dispense with the requirement of mandatory HIV testing of foreigners, including foreign students with effect from 23.9.2002.

6. Outlay for National AIDS Control Programme Phase-II.

World Bank	Rs 959 Crores
United State Agency for International Development assisted AVERT Project in Maharashtra	Rs 166 Crores
Department for International Development, UK assisted Partnership for Sexual Health Project	Rs 104 Crores
Canadian International Development Agency assisted HIV/AIDS Project	Rs 37.81 Crores
United Nation Development Programme assisted HIV/AIDS Project	Rs. 6.47 Crores